

Ibadan

there are flowers you can't touch outside someone's house

at night, a mother

pounds the head of her newborn

at first, it is music

then the silence of crickets

we gather dust sand murals wilt flowers worn sandals iron cast ibadan over dreams

we collect the first fruits ones older women snatch from us in sacred rooms fried in sin

my aunt's husband sacrifices her for riches the shade of shadows standstill in his courtyard we no longer go
to their house no longer eat their foods ones my cousins bring in baskets covered with towels

i kick a frog out of my slippers put saliva on my wound leave for school the morning i'm kidnapped
when they found me i was standing by a poll unconscious the window of grief that opened in
my family shut itself & opened in a house down the street children began to die then
we could no longer go to the playfield at dusk to run & sing & dance & call someone ugly & watch them cry
& sing them *sakasakashushu*

everywhere a weed grows is a wild mouth eating children

i dream that someone carves my friend's eye, & the next day he is gone, forever

what do i know about leaving that held the hands that snatched me?

we gather dust for bodies that never make it home

pray over their bodiless graves, wash our hands in the river down the road

& lock ourselves in our parents' house

no one knew what took everyone.